

Amendments to the Claims

Claims 1-35 (canceled).

Claim 36 (currently amended): An absorbent article having a length and a width, a front area and a rear area, and a central area between the front and rear areas, said absorbent article comprising:

- (a) a liquid-permeable layer, which, when the absorbent article is in use, is turned toward a body of a wearer;
- (b) a liquid-impermeable layer, which, when the absorbent article is in use, is turned away from such body of such wearer;
- (c) a liquid distribution layer disposed between said liquid-permeable layer and said liquid-impermeable layer, said liquid distribution layer comprising
 - (i) an undulating strip of material (26) from the central area into at least one of the front area and the rear area, and
 - (ii) an additional strip of material (28) disposed between the undulating strip of material (26) and the liquid-impermeable layer, and extending between the front area and the rear area, said additional strip of material (28) having ~~a portion thereof wherein~~ openings formed therethrough exclusively in one or both of the front area and the rear area of the absorbent article such that said formed openings are spaced from each other by a the central area of the ~~portion absorbent article~~ which is devoid of such formed openings; and

(d) a liquid storage layer between the liquid-impermeable layer and the liquid distribution layer, said liquid distribution layer transferring fluid to the liquid storage layer in one or both the front area and the rear area, said undulating layer comprising elongate undulations defining elongate open flow channels between said undulating layer and underlying and overlying elements of said absorbent article which are in contact with said undulating layer.

Claim 37 (previously presented): An absorbent article as in Claim 36, said openings in said additional strip of sheet material reflecting having been mechanically-formed subsequent to formation of said additional strip of sheet material.

Claim 38 (previously presented): An absorbent article as in Claim 36 wherein the undulating strip of material selectively facilitates transfer of fluid longitudinally, along the length of said absorbent article, into one or both the front area and the rear area of the absorbent article.

Claim 39 (previously presented): An absorbent article as in Claim 36, the undulations being arranged so as to form elongate and generally continuous transport channels extending along the length of said absorbent article.

Claim 40 (previously presented): An absorbent article as in Claim 36 wherein the undulating strip of material defines elongate undulations therein, connected at spaced locations to said additional strip of material.

Claim 41 (canceled).

Claim 42 (previously presented): An absorbent article as in Claim 36 wherein said additional strip of material (28) comprises an uncreped through-air-dried material.

Claim 43 (previously presented): An absorbent article as in Claim 36, said liquid storage layer extending from the central area into the front area and the rear area, the liquid storage layer having a higher liquid retention capacity per unit area of said absorbent article in the respective one or both of the front area or the rear area than in the central area.

Claim 44 (previously presented): An absorbent article as in Claim 36, said liquid distribution layer transferring fluid to at least part of the liquid storage layer at areas of the liquid distribution layer and of the liquid storage layer, which are brought into contact with one another via compression.

Claims 45-47 (canceled).

Claim 48 (previously presented): An absorbent article as in Claim 36, the liquid distribution layer comprising fibrous compositions about said openings, wherein the openings in the liquid distribution layer have discharge ends at a major surface of said liquid storage layer, for transferring fluid, such funnel-shaped openings tapering inwardly toward the liquid storage layer.

Claim 49 (previously presented): An absorbent article having a length and a width, a front area and a rear area, and a central area between the front and rear areas, said absorbent article comprising:

- (a) a liquid-permeable layer which, when the absorbent article is in use, is disposed toward a body of a user;
- (b) a liquid-impermeable layer which, when the absorbent article is in use, is disposed away from such body of such user;

- (c) a liquid distribution layer comprising an uppermost layer and at least one take-away layer, at least one of said at least one take away layer having discrete passages therethrough, and zones of relatively greater fiber density adjacent the discrete passages, the relatively greater fiber density promoting movement of liquid toward the liquid-impermeable layer, the discrete passages being disposed exclusively in one or both of the front area and the rear area of the absorbent article whereby the central area is devoid of the discrete passages, said uppermost layer being positioned between said liquid-permeable layer and said at least one take-away layer, and being devoid of such passages therethrough, said liquid distribution layer being disposed between the liquid-permeable layer and the liquid-impermeable layer; and
- (d) a liquid storage layer disposed between the liquid-impermeable layer and the liquid distribution layer, said liquid distribution layer transferring fluid to at least part of the liquid storage layer of the absorbent article.

Claim 50 (previously presented): An absorbent article, comprising:

- (a) a liquid-permeable layer which, when the absorbent article is in use, is disposed toward a body of a user;
- (b) a liquid-impermeable layer which, when the absorbent article is in use, is disposed away from such body of such user;
- (c) a liquid distribution layer, which comprises discrete passages therethrough, said discrete passages facilitating movement of liquid toward the liquid-impermeable layer; and

(d) a liquid storage layer disposed between the liquid-impermeable layer and the liquid distribution layer,

said liquid distribution layer comprising an overlying strip of material and an additional strip of material, said passages being arranged in edges of the additional strip of material, said edges being folded inward such that said edges are facing the overlying strip of material.

Claim 51 (previously presented): An absorbent article as in Claim 50 wherein said edges run in a longitudinal direction of the absorbent article, and are folded over a central portion of the additional strip of material such that the passages taper inwardly toward the liquid storage layer.

Claim 52 (previously presented): An absorbent article as in Claim 50, further comprising undulations in said overlying strip of material defining fluid transport channels extending in a longitudinal direction of said absorbent article.

Claim 53 (previously presented): An absorbent article as in Claim 50 wherein the additional strip of material comprises an uncreped through-air-dried material.

Claim 54 (previously presented): An absorbent article as in Claim 49, the liquid storage layer extending from the front area to the rear area of said absorbent article, the liquid storage layer having a higher liquid retention capacity per unit area of said absorbent article in the respective at least one of the front area and the rear area of the absorbent article, than in the central area.

Claim 55 (previously presented): An absorbent article as in Claim 49 wherein areas of the liquid distribution layer and areas of the liquid storage layer are in contact with one another via compression, thereby facilitating transfer of liquid.

Claim 56 (canceled).

Claim 57 (previously presented): An absorbent article as in Claim 49 wherein the liquid distribution layer has feet at tapering ends of the passage, said feet being in contact with the liquid storage layer at a surface of the liquid storage layer.

Claim 58 (canceled).

Claim 59 (previously presented): An absorbent article as in Claim 49 wherein the absorbent article comprises a woman's sanitary pad or a woman's hygiene inlay.

Claim 60 (previously presented): An absorbent article as in Claim 50 wherein the overlying strip of material contains a colorant.

Claim 61 (previously presented): An absorbent article having a front area, a rear area, and a central area between the front area and the rear area, said absorbent article comprising:

- (a) a liquid-permeable layer which, when the absorbent article is in use, is disposed toward a body of a wearer;
- (b) a liquid-impermeable layer which, when the absorbent article is in use, is disposed away from such body of such wearer;
- (c) a fibrous liquid distribution layer, which promotes movement of liquid toward the liquid-impermeable layer, said liquid distribution layer being disposed between the liquid-permeable layer and the liquid-impermeable layer; and
- (d) a liquid storage layer disposed between the liquid-impermeable layer and the liquid distribution layer,

said liquid distribution layer comprising areas having passages defining openings for transferring liquid, said liquid distribution layer comprising feet at ends of such passages, said feet contacting the liquid storage layer, and forming areas, between the feet, of separation between the liquid distribution layer and the liquid storage layer where the liquid distribution layer and the liquid storage layer are spaced from each other, whereby said areas of separation attenuate reverse wicking of liquid from the liquid storage layer to the liquid distribution layer.

Claim 62 (previously presented): An absorbent article having a front area, a rear area, and a central area arranged between the front area and the rear area, said absorbent article comprising:

- (a) a liquid-permeable layer which, when the absorbent article is in use, is disposed toward a body of a wearer;
- (b) a liquid-impermeable layer which, when the absorbent article is in use, is disposed away from such body of such wearer;
- (c) a liquid distribution layer disposed between the liquid-permeable layer and the liquid-impermeable layer, said liquid distribution layer including at least first and second take-away layers each having funnel-shaped openings defining discrete passages, the discrete passages being disposed exclusively in one or both of the front area and the rear area of the absorbent article whereby the central area is devoid of the discrete passages, respective openings of said first take-away layer and said second take-away layer being spaced laterally from each other, with layer-

- to-layer surface interface between a said opening on said first take-away layer and any said opening on said second take-away layer; and
- (d) a liquid storage layer disposed between the liquid-impermeable layer and the liquid distribution layer.

Claim 63 (previously presented): An absorbent article having a front area, a rear area, and a central area arranged between the front area and the rear area, said absorbent article comprising:

- (a) a liquid-permeable layer which, when the absorbent article is in use, is disposed toward a body of a wearer;
- (b) a liquid-impermeable layer which, when the absorbent article is in use, is disposed away from such body of such wearer;
- (c) a liquid distribution layer disposed between the liquid-permeable layer and the liquid-impermeable layer, said liquid distribution layer including at least first and second take-away layers each having funnel-shaped openings defining discrete passages;
- (d) a liquid storage layer disposed between the liquid-impermeable layer and the liquid distribution layer, wherein respective openings of said first take-away layer are spaced laterally from each other, with layer-to-layer surface interface between a said opening on said first take-away layer and any said opening on said second take-away layer; and
- (e) said liquid distribution layer further comprising an uppermost layer disposed between the liquid-permeable layer and said take-away layers, said uppermost layer being void of any funnel-shaped openings.

Claim 64 (previously presented): An absorbent article as in Claim 63, said liquid distribution layer further comprising an undulating strip of material disposed between the liquid-permeable layer and said uppermost layer, said undulating strip of material containing colorant.

Claim 65 (previously presented): An absorbent article as in Claim 62, a first respective portion of each said funnel-shaped opening closest to the liquid-permeable layer being wider than a second respective portion of each said funnel-shaped opening most remote from the liquid-permeable layer, thereby forcing X-Y-direction travel as well as Z-direction travel of any potential reverse wicking liquid.

Claim 66 (previously presented): An absorbent article as in Claim 49 wherein each of said at least one take-away layer comprises discrete passages defining openings (30) extending therethrough, said discrete passages tapering inwardly toward the liquid storage layer and facilitating the absorbent article (10) in transferring liquid from the liquid distribution layer (22) toward the liquid storage layer (24).

Claim 67 (previously presented): An absorbent article (10) having a front area (12) and a rear area (14), and a central area (16) between the front (12) and rear (14) areas, the absorbent article (10) comprising:

- (a) a liquid-permeable layer (18) which, when the absorbent article (10) is in use, is turned toward a body of a wearer;
- (b) a liquid-impermeable layer (20) which, when the absorbent article (10) is in use, is turned away from such body of such wearer;
- (c) a liquid distribution layer (22) disposed between the liquid-permeable layer (18) and the liquid-impermeable layer (20), and extending from the central

area (16) into at least one of the front area (12) and the rear area (14);

and

- (d) a liquid storage layer (24) disposed between the liquid-impermeable layer (20) and the liquid distribution layer (22), the liquid storage layer extending from the front area to the rear area of said absorbent article, the liquid storage layer having a higher liquid retention capacity per unit area of said absorbent article in the respective at least one of the front area and the rear area of the absorbent article, than in the central area,

the liquid distribution layer (22) comprising a major surface, which defines multiple open flow channels which promote liquid flow in a longitudinal direction toward the front (12) and/or rear (14) areas, further characterized in that the liquid distribution layer facilitates transfer of liquid longitudinally along the surface of the liquid distribution layer (22), and toward the liquid-impermeable layer (20), to at least part of the liquid storage layer (24a) which is located in one or both of the front area (12) and the rear area (14) of the absorbent article (10).